RICE | BUSINESS
Jones Graduate School of Business

BUSI 296 – Business Communication
Spring 2021

Course Syllabus

Section 001: Tuesday/Thursday, 8:00 AM – 9:20 AM
Section 002: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:40 AM – 11:00 AM

	Section 1 and 2
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Office Hours:	**By appointment on Zoom**

Course Description

BUSI 296 introduces students to the key knowledge, skills, and practices required for successful personal and organizational communication in business. The course is structured around three major topics:

- Defining yourself to others
- Engaging internal and external stakeholders
- Selling your ideas and influencing others

You will learn and apply best practices in business communication, including creating a strong personal presence, developing a communications strategy, creating and delivering effective presentations, writing clear and concise business documents, managing meetings, and communicating across cultures, generations, and genders.

We will also explore the fundamentals of business organization, design, and management, including how a business identifies and communicates with key internal and external stakeholders.

Assignments include individual and team projects. For the latter, you will be assigned to a team, and your learning will include developing a project plan, assigning tasks, and managing the individual tasks to successful completion.

We will use Zoom to deliver all course materials and student presentations. We will discuss how the Zoom platform affects communication best practices and how to adapt to it.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will demonstrate the following:

Understanding of key concepts, processes, and frameworks, including
- Business formation, organization, operation, and management
- Stakeholder identification, analysis, and communication
- Business communication vehicles and venues

Mastery of best practices in
- Presenting, writing, and interpersonal communication in business
- Developing communication strategies and plans
- Creating and delivering effective internal and external communications

Methods of Learning

Since the course focuses on both knowledge and skills, class sessions will include in-class and video lectures, discussions, group and individual exercises, and student presentations.

Outside of class, you will complete writing and presentation assignments, which I will review and discuss in class. I will record your class presentations, and you will receive instructor and peer feedback.

Outside of class, you will also view videos on various course topics and prepare to discuss them in class. I create these videos to limit the amount of class time I spend on lectures and to increase the time we spend in discussion and application.

The basic structure of the course is Instruction/Application/Feedback. We will discuss communication best practices, frameworks, and models, and then you will apply them and receive feedback from me and your classmates. To measure your progress in public speaking, you will complete a speaking assessment early in the term, and we will use this baseline to measure your progress and the effectiveness of the course.

Course Policies

Classroom Discussion: Zoom imposes limitations on this aspect of the course. I will use polls to solicit input and quizzes to test your understanding of course content. I will also ask for volunteers to unmute your microphone and provide input to our discussion. You may also send me (or the group) a message through Chat if you choose.

Presentations: You will deliver assigned presentations over Zoom. On the first day of class I will review some of the important considerations in presenting over Zoom, and you will have time to familiarize yourself with Zoom functionality, including sharing your screen with your classmates.

Written Assignments: During the course, you will complete several written assignments. In addition to clear thinking and expression, I expect your writing to be free from spelling, usage, and grammatical errors. Consider that anything you write for me is going to a senior executive or your best customer, someone who expects careful attention to detail and "zero defects." Your writing is part of your personal "brand," and it is a clear reflection of your communication competence.

Late and Makeup Work: Submit your work on time. Acceptance of late work is at my sole discretion. **I will lower the grade (at least half a grade point) of any late work.** All makeup work is also at my discretion and needs to be completed within one week from the original due date for a given assignment. **All assignments are graded only once, unless I request re-submission.**

My Expectations: I will strive to make each class session a lively, intellectually engaging experience for all of you. You will contribute to this outcome by doing the following:

- **Attend every class:** Zoom records your attendance when you register, and I expect you to attend every session. If you cannot attend a class meeting, notify me before the class. If I am notified, I will accept legitimate reasons (e.g., sickness, conference attendance, job interview, or university sponsored event) as excused absences that will not affect your class engagement grade.
- **Be on time:** You will need to register for every class meeting, so begin this process early to be ready to start the class on time.
- **Prepare thoroughly:** Expect a quiz or poll in every class session. Be ready with thoughtful responses to the reading, videos, and study questions.
- **Participate in class:** Seek opportunities to engage in every class session, including the optional engagement opportunities. In addition to the quality of your participation, I value your energy and enthusiasm for the discussions and activities.

The Rice Honor Code: Unless you are working on a team assignment, **you alone** are responsible for your work. If the assignment is a team project, the entire team is responsible. Each student or each team should place the Honor Code on all assignments. For team assignments, you only need to write the pledge one time, but all students must sign it.

Students with Disabilities: Speak with me during the first two weeks of class if you have a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations**.** All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Disability Support Services in Allen Center.

Electronic Devices: Do not use electronic devices other than those for participating in the Zoom session. Turn off your smartphone during class (***off*** not ***silenced***). Turn off your smartwatch or place it where you will not be tempted to check it. I may relax these Jones School policies in some situations. Please contact me prior to class about a specific need.

Grading: I will give you numeric scores for your graded assignments. While these scores correspond to the letter grades below, I will calculate your final letter grade according to the Jones School policy, which requires that the overall course GPA should not exceed 3.5.

A+ = 100-99	B+ = 89-88	C+ = 79-78	D = 69-60
A = 98-93	B = 87-83	C = 77-73	F = Below 60
A- = 92-90	B- = 82-80	C- = 72-70	R = Complete Redo

Engagement Rubric:

100 Exceptional engagement	**90** Strong engagement	**80** Moderate engagement	**70** Occasional engagement	**0** Frequent absences; no engagement

Assignment Summary

Due Date	Assignments	I/T*	Value
February 2	Speaking assessment (scored but not graded)	I	NA
February 11	Writing Assignment #1: Reflection on Interviewing Workshop	I	5%
February 16	Individual Presentation: Presentation #1	I	5%
February 19	Course Take Aways #1 due	I	NA
March 2	Team Persuasive Presentation (Content): Presentation #2	T	5%
March 2	Team Persuasive Presentation (Delivery): Presentation #2	I	10%
March 5	Writing Assignment #2: Email to Dean	I	10%
March 19	Course Take Aways #2 due	I	NA
March 22	Writing Assignment #3: Crisis Holding Statement	T	10%
April 15	Individual Consulting Presentation: Presentation #3	I	15%
April 27	Individual Presentation #4	I	20%
On-going	Quizzes	I	10%
On-going	Class engagement: in-class exercises, in-class discussions, optional activities, peer feedback, take away input	I	10%

* I/T = Individual or Team grade Value = % of final grade

Presentation – 55%; Writing – 25%; Quizzes – 10%; Class Engagement – 10%

Session Plan and Schedule of Assignments

Tuesday, January 26 (Session 1)
Topic: Introduction to Business Communication

- Introductions, course overview, learning objectives, expectations
- Personal "Presence," Speaking Assessment assignment

Be prepared to discuss the following:

1. Why did you enroll in this course? What outcomes do you anticipate?
2. What are your strengths as a communicator? What aspects do you want to improve?
3. What elements contribute to a speaker's "presence"?
4. Who comes to mind when you think of speakers with a strong "presence"?

Thursday, January 28 (Session 2)
Topic: Defining Yourself to Others

- Creating an Individual Brand
- Managing Performance Anxiety

Tuesday, February 2 (Session 3)
Speaking Assessment (scored but not graded)

Thursday, February 4 (Session 4)
Topic: Interviewing Fundamentals

Please have your current resume handy

Tuesday, February 9 (Session 5)
Topic: Interviewing Workshop

Be prepared to respond to interview questions from previous session and to provide feedback to your classmates on their interviews

Graded assignment due on Thursday, February 11
Writing Assignment #1: Personal reflection on interviewing; assignment detail on Canvas.

Thursday, February 11(Session 6)
Business Presentation Best Practices

Read: "Powerful Presentations" and "Managing Q&A in Business Presentations" on Canvas
Assignment for February 16th: Individual Presentation delivery

Tuesday, February 16 (Session 7)
Individual Presentation delivered; Presentation #1

Graded assignment during class: Individual Presentation; assignment details on Canvas.

Thursday, February 18 (Session 8)
Topic: Business Communication Strategy Refresher

Read: "Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy" On Canvas in Files
View: Communication Strategy Video on Panopto; watch for link on Canvas

Tuesday, February 23 (Session 9)
Topic: Influence and Persuasion; Team and topic assignment for Persuasive Presentation

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What opportunities have you had to persuade others to say, do, or believe something?
2. How did you approach the situation? Were you successful? Why or why not?
3. Is there an approach or style of influence that you find most effective?

Thursday, February 25 (Session 10)
Topic: Persuasive Presentation Reminders and Team working session

View: PowerPoint Design Principles Video on Panopto; watch for link on Canvas

Tuesday, March 2 (Session 11)
Persuasive Presentation delivered; Presentation #2

Graded assignment due during class:
Present your team's proposal to Rice leadership; assignment details on Canvas.

Thursday, March 4 (Session 12)
Topic: Business Writing/Emails
- Academic and business writing
- Email best practices: Good, bad, and ugly emails

Read: "The Keys to Better Business Writing" On Canvas in Files.
Bring to class examples of emails you've written or received that you believe were effective or ineffective. Why did you select these emails?

Graded assignment due on Friday, March 5
Writing Assignment #2: Prepare email message; assignment detail on Canvas.

Tuesday, March 9 (Session 13)
Topic: Business and the Business Environment
- Business Architecture
- Marketing and Innovation

Read: Greg Satell**,** "4 Ways to Build an Innovative Team," On Canvas in Files
Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What is your conception of American business and business people in the 21st Century?
2. What companies do you consider leaders in Innovation and Marketing? Why?

Thursday, March 11 (Session 14)
Topic: The American Workplace

- Elements of Company "Greatness"
- Workplace productivity issues

Required Readings (All on Canvas in Files)
Robert Sutton, "Building the Civilized Workplace"; and "Memo to the CEO"
Jeffrey Pfeffer, "'Leadership BS' and the reality of unpleasant bosses"
Jeffrey Pfeffer, "3 lessons from the Amazon takedown"

Tuesday, March 16 NO CLASS

Thursday, March 18 (Session 15)
Topic: Crisis Communications

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What constitutes a corporate crisis?
2. Have you been personally affected by one? How so?

Graded assignment due End of Day March 22
Writing Assignment #3: Prepare Crisis "Holding Statement"; assignment detail on Canvas.

Tuesday, March 23 (Session 16)
Topic: Cross-cultural Communication – Workshop

View: Cultural Dimensions Video on Panopto; watch for link on Canvas
Complete and bring to class: Cultural Dimensions Worksheet on Canvas
Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What are the key elements that define a culture and its communication style?
2. Have you lived or worked in a region other than the United States?
3. How has that affected your personal behavior?

Thursday March 25 (Session 17)
Topic: Generations in the Workplace

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What are the key characteristics of your attitude toward work, success, and business/life balance? Are they typical of your generation's attitude? How so?
2. How do your attitudes differ from your parents' or grandparents' attitudes?

Tuesday, March 30 (Session 18)
Topic: Gender Communications

Required Readings: All on Canvas in Files
1) "The Power of Talk"
2) "Speaking While Female"
3) "The Universal Phenomenon of Men Interrupting Women"
4) "It's Not Just You"
Be prepared to discuss the following:

1. How does Tannen define "linguistic style"? How do we develop our style?
2. What are some of the most important differences in the linguistic style between the genders? Why are these differences important in business communications?
3. Do the New York Times articles support or contradict Tannen's argument?
4. Are the generalizations on gender differences in Tannen's article valid today? Why or why not?
5. What differences in linguistic style have you experienced?

Thursday, April 1 (Session 19)
Topic: Negotiation Fundamentals

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What words, images, personalities come to mind when someone says, "negotiation"?
2. What types of negotiations have you participated in? What was your experience?

Tuesday, April 6 (Session 20)
Topic: Business Consulting and Consulting Presentations; Topic assignment

Thursday, April 8 NO CLASS

Tuesday, April 13 (Session 21)
Topic: Presentation Reminders and working session

Thursday, April 15 (Session 22)
Presentation #3, Individual Presentation delivered

Graded assignment during class: Individual Presentation; assignment details on Canvas.

Tuesday, April 20 (Session 23)
Topic: Persuasion and "Pre-suasion"

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1) Which of Cialdini's six principles of influence have you found to be most effective? How and when have you used them?
2) Did you "prepare" your audience for your request? If so, how?

Thursday, April 22 (Session 24)
Presentation #4 Assignment and Working Session

Tuesday, April 27 (Session 25)
Presentation #4, Individual Presentation delivered

Graded assignment during class: Individual Presentation; assignment details on Canvas.

Thursday, April 29 (Session 26)
Topic: Course recap and overflow